# LOGISTICS CLUSTER ASSESSMENTS

**Objective:** During the Workshop on Strengthening Evidence-Based Humanitarian Decision-Making in Geneva on 05-06 November 2009, it was agreed that clusters would provide information on their needs assessment practices in emergencies. **The purpose of this paper is to outline Logistics Cluster's role in conducting assessments during the different phases of emergency response**.

**Overview:** The Logistics Cluster does not engage in programmatic needs assessments (beneficiary focused) but undertakes Logistics Capacity Assessments (preparedness), rapid assessments (response), and infrastructure mapping (operations). In other words, a programmatic needs assessment determines 'the what' whilst the logistics assessment determines the feasibility of 'the how'.

Logistics assessments build on information derived from needs assessments to ascertain how to meet identified needs through delivery. The challenge is to be able to respond to the need for humanitarian aid by assessing the most appropriate form of transport to destination areas, using the most viable routes and ensuring that appropriate assets are available to fulfill the delivery needs. Delivery will be affected by the condition of the infrastructure, requiring a transport/ movement assessment. The Logistics Cluster compiles information using SDI-T standard templates for logistics assessment.

The Logistics Cluster does not have pre-set standards for measurement; indicators are reported in their existing condition. Decisions are then made on how to effect delivery based on the condition of infrastructure, availability of assets and resources (e.g. road conditions, airport capacity, type of vehicle available, availability of air assets and funding).

**Depending on the phase and context of the emergency, the following logistics assessments may be carried out:**

**1. Logistics Capacity Assessments (LCA) - Preparedness**

**Baseline data** is provided in a fixed template for a specific country containing key information for logistics operations – this information requires updating on a regular basis.

- Infrastructure status: ports, airports, road assessments, storage facilities.
- Available logistics-related services: Fuel providers, transporters, local markets (food items, tents, warehouses, generators, oil, water equipment), customs procedures.

As of December 2009 there are LCAs for over 60 different countries available on the Logistics Cluster website in the LCA section. Logistics preparedness also includes mapping of infrastructure such as key access routes, presented in the form of Logistics Planning Map for specific countries in the GIS Map Centre

**2. Rapid Logistics Capacity Assessments - Response**

These assessments are conducted by Logistics Response Team (LRT) members during **the early stages of an emergency** to assist with delivery of humanitarian relief and access to affected populations. The type of assessment and exact timing will depend on the nature of the emergency:

- **Road conditions assessment** – accessibility for different types of vehicle, conditions of bridges; possibility of bypass for damaged sections of road; cut off areas (to feed into GIS SDI-T Geoportal)
- **Other key infrastructure –** airport facilities; availability of storage; facilities for logistics hubs

- **Availability of assets –** type of trucks available and their suitability for cargo and road conditions; loading equipment
- **Potential bottlenecks –** highlighting the main challenges or areas of difficulty expected, from the import of relief goods through to delivery to final distribution points
- **Quick market assessment –** consolidate information on local availability of key items needed for the relief effort

This is key information that will be compiled by the Logistics Cluster cell in-country and shared with the humanitarian community so that they can plan their logistics operation accordingly.

**3. Geospatial Infrastructure Systems / Mapping**

Another feature of Logistics Cluster assessments is GIS mapping. This is compiled during a rapid needs assessment and presented as a map for the humanitarian community. Information is dynamic and requires regular updating, including through the online portal (SDI-T Geoportal).

Information collection is standardized in the form of a road conditions reporting form (with guidance) which enables information to be collated and represented in a map and includes the following data:

- Surface – paved, gravel, dirt
- Road condition – rough, smooth, snow/ice, mud
- Practicability / type of traffic that can pass – light truck (<10T), truck (10 -20T) + trailer (+20T), 4WD, non-motorized traffic
- Obstacle type – mine/UXO, roadblock, debris, flooded, bridge, mudslide and obstacles impact In terms of road practicability

Further information on GIS mapping in emergencies can be found at the GIS Map Centre

**4. Logistics Capacity Assessments – Post disaster / conflict**

The short-term nature of logistics support to relief efforts means that involvement in early recovery activities is not part of the standard approach. However in different situations the Logistics Cluster has played an important role in supporting the rehabilitation of infrastructure and building local logistics capacity. After the initial response to the shock is completed and the humanitarian community moves into an early recovery phase, the Logistics Cluster has a role to advocate for priorities for infrastructure rehabilitation which would re-establish sustained access to affected populations and markets.

In DRC assessments were conducted to plan the rehabilitation of 1000 km of roads to allow humanitarian agencies better access to populations in need of assistance. In South Sudan over the past five years, the WFP Logistics Team has managed the South Sudan Road Rehabilitation Project. Working in close coordination with the Government of South Sudan Ministry of Transport and Roads a total of 2,532 km of roads were assessed and rehabilitated and over 1000 km of roads maintained. The project also installed ten bridges and cleared over 360,000 sq metres of mine-affected areas. Intervention was based on consultation with the humanitarian community in order to prioritise basic infrastructure necessary for support to IDP return and reintegration programmes.

**Recommendations for Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessments**

**Some recommendations to improve the assessment utility for logistics planning** – examples taken from a recent inter-agency rapid needs assessment (RNA) in the Philippines:

- There is need for a logistics officer to participate in rapid assessments to ensure key data for supporting logistics response is collected.

- Objective of RNA: Include the assessment of logistics infrastructure as an objective. This is complementary to the identification of needs and will ensure that the methodology is appropriate to gathering logistics information.

- Information should be precise, clear and brief. The following example is too vague: *"Access: Trucks can access most parts of the visited barangays, but the most flooded remain only accessibly by boat".* A more useful assessment would document the following information:

  > *Access: Barangays 7, 4 and 3 can be accessed by all wheel drive trucks only. In Barangay 3 highway 66 is flooded between villages Alpha (GPS coordinates) and Beta (GPS coordinates), whilst village Whiskey (GPS coordinates) can be accessed by x point (GPS coordinates) turnoff from highway 66 but by 4WD light vehicle only. In Barangay 8 affected villages (GPS coordinates) are accessible by water transport.*

The Logistics sector requires precise data on road conditions (e.g. accessibility for size and types of trucks) and GPS coordinates of impassible sections. This also allows calculation of alternative routes and the cost implication of longer distances. The lack of inclusion of such information necessitates a second round of assessment to properly assess road conditions, causing delay to the delivery of relief items.

- The following example is too vague: "*Food and non-food items are urgently needed for people in flooded* areas" – Knowing the types of items required enables the logistics team to plan ahead for appropriate assets and methods of transportation. Shelter kits are more bulky than food items and may require larger trucks, therefore it may be necessary to consider use of air-drop for areas that are not initially accessible by road transport. However some items such as buckets for hygiene kits cannot be used in airdrops because they break. Other considerations include whether the road conditions support the selected type of transport and the availability of relief items on local markets. If items need to be imported are there customs restrictions that apply?

- *"Observed needs: Provision of food and NFI (hygiene kits, jerry can, clothes, mats) for the severely affected households*" – This information allows logistics team to anticipate prioritisation by the humanitarian community: i.e. what needs to be transported first.

- Approximate numbers of affected populations enable the logistics team to anticipate the demand for delivery of items. This translates into planning schedules for frequency of movement planning, depending on transport assets available.

**"The effectiveness of a response will depend on how successful the delivery system is"**

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